

## **Memorandum**

**To:** Cabinet Secretaries  
Agency Heads  
Personnel Executives  
**From:** Sharon Marcum, Executive Director  
**Date:** May 13, 2002  
**Subject:** Employee Educational Assistance Policy

Attached is the new revised Employee Educational Assistance Policy for Kentucky state government employees. This version replaces and supersedes the one issued in January 1995.

We have conducted a thorough review of the existing policy and received numerous suggestions from various agencies. Many of those suggestions have been incorporated in the revised policy. We particularly want to thank the Personnel Cabinet and those who participated in their policy review group for their input and suggestions.

The policy is effective June 1, 2002, however we recognize that a transition period will be needed to allow agencies to make needed changes in their internal policies and therefore will allow a period of transition between now and July 1, 2002. At that time the new policy will be fully effective, and the old policy will no longer be recognized.

In this memo, I will highlight some key issues to help you assess the impact of the changes that have been made in the policy:

**1. Advance Payment Only** - The most significant change is that the policy no longer offers agencies the choice of reimbursement or advance payment of educational assistance benefits. All agencies that elect to offer the benefit to their employees will be required to do so on an advance payment basis. This means that tuition payments, for example, are made directly to the school at the time of enrollment. Agencies do still have the option as to whether to offer Educational Assistance, and the funding of the benefit continues to be made from agency budgets. This change was suggested in the review process to make the program uniform for all covered state employees.

**2. Types of Programs and Providers** - A lot has changed since the last revision in 1995, and we want to reflect those changes and recognize the variety of educational options currently available. These choices are outlined in section B.

**3. Tuition Cost Limits** - The issue of establishing a limit on the cost of education supported by the program is also addressed in section B. This provision limits the amount that can be paid at private or out of state schools to the tuition amount at the state college or university located nearest the employee's county of employment.

**4. KSU Preference** - One of the most important provisions that has not changed is the Kentucky State University "preference" requirement now found in section F. It requires that employees who live in or work in Franklin or one of the adjoining counties will receive educational assistance only for courses taken at Kentucky State University, unless the course or degree program is not available or offered at KSU. The executive director of the Governmental Services Center is authorized to approve exceptions.

**5. Maximum Courses Allowed** - The section covering maximum courses allowed has been revised to reflect the existence of non-traditional session periods (quarters, inter-sessions, etc.) and drops the reference to semester hours in favor of using the term "courses."

**6. Employment Service Obligation** - There has also been a change in the employment service obligation of an employee after they complete a course paid for by Educational Assistance. Previously the requirement was three months with the agency. The new provision is six months with state government.

**7. Forms and Processing** - A standardized form is provided for use by agencies, or the agency may adopt their own form as long as it contains the Payroll Deduction and Grade Release statement to be signed by the employee. All forms handling and approvals will continue to take place within the cabinet or agency. Forms are not forwarded to GSC or to the Personnel Cabinet at any point in the process.

**8. Exceptions** – There is no substantive change in what is now section K, but a reminder of the process for requesting exceptions may be helpful. Under this section, the executive director of the Governmental Services Center may approve exceptions to any of the provisions of this policy based on a request in writing from an appointing authority. It is important to remember that the reason for the exception must be based on a "public interest" that would be served by granting it.

**9. Periodic Audits** – Please note that the policy continues to provide that GSC may conduct periodic audits of agency records regarding this policy. No standard or regular reports are required, but agencies should maintain their records in a manner that would facilitate auditing by GSC.

If you have any questions regarding the Educational Assistance Policy, please feel free to contact Allen R. Bryan, Principal Assistant and Manager of Organizational Support Services at GSC at 564-817- Ext. 239.

**Thank you,**